

Who is Having Success with Learning?

Global Fund for Children

Global NGO develops tools to track grantee progress and its own performance.

Quick Grantmaker Stats

Type of funder	Intermediary
Geography/Issue Area	Global/Children in Need
When founded	1994
Total assets (as of FY 2013)	\$7.6 million (Annual budget)
Annual giving (as of FY 2013)	\$4.1 million
Number of staff	24
Website	www.globalfundforchildren.org
Brief description of the program/practice being discussed	Tools that support learning about grantmaking performance and grantee capacity.

1. Describe the situation or practice.

The Global Fund for Children is committed to developing better ways to evaluate and understand its work and the work of its grantees around the world. Over the last several years, GFC has developed two learning tools that shed new light on grantee and grantmaker performance and that suggest pathways to better results.

2. What have you tried to do differently?

The Organizational Capacity Index

GFC's Organizational Capacity Index is a self-assessment tool that enables GFC to collect and analyze data from grantee self-assessments, as well as from program officer site visits. Grantees use the OCI not only to assess their capacity in eight key functional areas, but also to learn where they might focus capacity-building work in their next grant period.

The OCI is incorporated into GFC's grant proposal and reporting forms. GFC designed the assessment based on common capacity indicators found in similar assessment tools, slightly adapting the indicators to make them more relevant to the community-based organizations that partner with the

grantmaker. The assessment includes indicators of increased organizational capacity in planning, fundraising, governance, human resources, financial management, learning and evaluation, external relations and information technology.

After the grantee completes the first baseline assessment in dialogue with the GFC program officer, the grantee may choose to seek out additional input from various stakeholders such as other staff, board members and clients in the community. The assessment can be completed by a group of people in as little as 30 minutes, or discussions can last as long as needed. GFC asks the grantee to update or complete the assessment once a year when renewing grants.

GFC had to work with grantee partners to help them see that the OCI was not strictly an evaluation tool but a learning and diagnostic to show how they are faring right now in core capacity areas, and to help them identify pathways to further development and growth. GFC uses the OCI scores to establish a dialogue with grantee partners that begins from the same point of entry in identifying priority areas for organizational development.

“GFC facilitates the use of the OCI tools by grassroots organizations to assess their organizational structure and programs as well as set their own annual goals. This enables them to rediscover themselves, initiate steps to improve, and ultimately take control of their own growth and development,” said Emmanuel Otoo, program officer for Africa and the Middle East.

Grantee Pathways to Success

The Global Fund for Children developed the Grantee Pathways to Success system to identify what stage of growth and development grantees are in, as well as what kinds of support from GFC will be most beneficial to their work.

The system places grantees in one of four stages of the funding relationship: 1) entering and orienting; 2) intensifying; 3) resolving and reflecting; and 4) exiting. “GPS helps us to work with grantees in a very systematic way where they can really benefit from the full range of services and the full relationship,” said Victoria Dunning, executive vice president at GFC. “It’s allowed us not only to be a strategic and targeted grantmaker, but it also allows us to streamline some of the processes by working with grantees in cohorts.”

Dunning explained that moving from stage one to stage four in the GPS framework can take between three to seven years. While GPS is a systemized approach to grantmaking, she added that there is room for qualitative decisions that allow for a more organic relationship between GFC and its grantees. Grants also have slightly different proposals and reporting at each

GPS stage. For example, the first step, entering and orienting, focuses on making sure grantees understand requirements for reporting, how GFC works and what sort of services it offers beyond the grant. In subsequent steps, GFC provides grantees with capacity-building and other support intended to move it to the subsequent steps.

“These tools allow us to have more rigorous discussions within GFC and with grantees on a subjective level. It’s not just about the numbers and the data and the analytics going into these systems; it’s also about being able to learn what’s working and articulating the case for our investments.”
– Victoria Dunning, Executive Vice President

3. What has been the result?

The OCI and GPS tools have proven valuable for GFC and its grantee partners by providing a shared language for talking about the grantee’s growth needs. Dunning cited examples of situations in which organizations’ OCI scores improved in response to specific organizational development inputs — for example, the governance score of an organization in Africa increased after GFC was working with the grantee to strengthen its board.

Otoo added that the OCI results enabled one grantee partner in Rwanda to prioritize strategic planning as an important area for development. The grantee used the diagnostic data to successfully apply to another funder for a strategic planning grant.

Most often, the OCI results are used to identify and tailor a scope of work for an organizational development consultant funded by GFC. Looking ahead, Dunning said GFC is interested in continuing to refine the OCI without changing it so much that an organization’s earlier scores become invalid.

Dunning said that Grantee Pathways to Success, for its part, has transformed GFC’s grantmaking process at all levels — for the grantee partner, program officers and board members — as each stakeholder gets and gives the information needed for better analysis and engagement. The new system has also streamlined grants management and administration; printed grant docketts are about half the size they were before GPS, and grantee partners are not duplicating information from prior proposals.

This allows GFC to focus on the funding relationship to maximize capacity-building grantmaking. “The GPS system has helped GFC to provide the right input at the right time for grantees,” Dunning said.

4. What are your key insights from doing the work?

To provide added context to the numbers associated with its capacity-building metrics and measurement tools, GFC makes a point of going into more depth in other important areas of measurement through case studies and other forms of qualitative reporting. Dunning summarized GFC’s philosophy when it comes to assessment as, “No numbers without stories, no stories without numbers.”

The OCI, for example, provides a place for program officers to explain anomalies or challenges facing the grantee. In addition, Dunning said program officers are in regular contact with grantees to identify issues that may be getting in the way of their development and growth.

The Origins of the OCI

GFC’s Organizational Capacity Index self-assessment tool originated from the grantmaker’s interest in fostering a better understanding of the impact of intermediary and small-grants funders on the capacity of nascent and emerging nonprofit organizations. “Some intermediary funders have been doing this work for more than 20 years and we have seen the field grow, and yet we still struggle to explain the value of this grantmaking model in terms of strengthening organizations so they can get better results on the ground,” said GFC’s Victoria Dunning.